



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

February 27, 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR: Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers
& Fisheries Sampling Branch Staff

FROM: David Potter
Branch Chief, FSB

SUBJECT: Observer In-Person Debriefings

The Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB) staff encourages observers to be debriefed in-person, although travel distances and sea day scheduling often makes it challenging. In-person debriefings between observers and NMFS staff are an essential component of the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program to enhance data quality and observer retention. It is estimated that between four to eight hours should be needed to complete a debriefing. During the debriefing process, the observers will cover their submitted trips in detail to ensure their completeness for data entry. Any outstanding questions that the editor may have will be reviewed. The observer should receive feedback on how they are performing, in terms of data collection and recording, sampling protocols, identification techniques, reporting compliance issues, and field performance as reported by fishermen. During the debriefing process, they will have an opportunity to view the photographs that they have taken and review their animal identification. FSB will check the key items (reference manuals, sampling tools, safety equipment, and electronics) to ensure that all items are up-to-date and in good condition. The observer will also meet with the Area Leads or Operations Coordinator to receive feedback from Fishermen Comment Cards and touch base on important fisheries management issues in their areas. Observers will be asked for feedback on the editor's performance. Safety issues will be reviewed and talked about. Informal meetings will be scheduled with the end users of the observer data, so the research scientists and observers have an opportunity to discuss issues directly. Other topics such as current data requests and data processing systems may be addressed as well. The Operations Coordinator, Area Leads, and/or Data Quality Lead (DQL) may all be present during all or parts of the debriefing process, primarily to encourage communication, get to know the observers and their work conditions, and provide support for the observer.

Under the direction of the Operations Coordinator, the DQL, or her designee, identifies when observers are due in for an in-person debriefing, informs the contractor, and schedules a date. At a minimum, in-person debriefings at the Observer Training Center should be done every six



months. In some cases, off-site debriefings may be arranged. The contractor should ensure that the observer brings the required gear for the debriefing (has to be the sampling gear of that particular observer), and plans on staying for the day. The DQL informs the editor and other appropriate FSB and Northeast Fisheries Science Center staff. The DQL assigns an FSB staff member as the “host” and assigns individuals, as available, to the various topics outlined on the Debriefing Checklist. The host will accompany the observer to the lab in Woods Hole, ensure a break is taken for lunch, and work through the checklist. On the back side of this memo is a checklist that will accompany the observer during the debriefing.

If you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact Amy VanAtten at amy.van.atten@noaa.gov or (508) 495-2266.

Thank you.

Attachment: Observer Debriefing Checklist



OBSERVER DEBRIEFING CHECKLIST

Observer Name: _____ Date: _____
 Host (FSB Staff): _____
 Location: _____

Observers must bring their NOAA Identification and the gear listed below:

References	Observer Manual, Biological Sampling Manual, iPAQ Manual
Sampling	Scales, calipers, tape measure
Safety	Survival suit
Electronics	iPAQ, pinger tester

Upon arrival at the Tech Park, the Observer will meet with the Data Quality Lead and will be issued this checklist. The observer will supply this checklist to each of the individuals listed below. Once all required topics are completed he/she would turn in this sheet to the Data Quality Lead. Thank you!

POSITION	TOPICS TO COVER	INDIVIDUAL	INITIALS	COMMENTS
DATA QUALITY LEAD / EDITOR	Review of edited trips. Data quality review.			
INCIDENTAL TAKE LEAD	Feedback and review of photos and turtle/mammal biological sample. Incidental Take questions addressed if needed.			
SAFETY LEAD	Feedback on Safety Checklist. Review of safety issues and current findings. Check survival gear.			
AREA LEAD / OPERATIONS COORDINATOR	Review of current management issues, feedback on port findings. Review diaries and Fishermen Comment Cards. Conduct editor's evaluation.			
TRAINER	Feedback and review of fish species identification.			
FSB STAFF	Review of gear measurements.			
OBSCON & SPECIAL REPORTING	Feedback on Obscon and SAP data. Review of iPAQ.			
OLE	Enforcement related issues.			
END USER OF OBSERVER DATA	Feedback on how the observer data is currently being used. Other demos.			
CONTRACTOR	Inform that the debriefing has been completed.			
OTHER				